



Flea markets and fun fairs are a tradition on Queen's Birthday!

Saturday, April 29 was the day designated this year to celebrate the birthday of Queen Beatrix, even though her actual birthday is in January! April 30, the day that is the official Queen's Birthday, was actually the birthday of her mother, Queen Juliana, who passed away last year. When Beatrix ascended to the throne twenty-six years ago, she kept the holiday on this date in honor of her mother. It is traditionally a day of festivities, as a birthday does mean a party, after all, and all Dutch subjects use it as an excuse to party hardy, beginning the night before. Since Sunday is considered a day for quiet religious devotion, this year Saturday was named the day for celebration, but of course, that didn't stop anyone from celebrating on both days, *and* the night before! There were a variety of events taking place on the island, but a favored tradition is an old fashioned Flea Market.

There is some debate where the term "Flea Market" comes from and there are three favored theories that prevail. Possibly, it is a direct translation of the French *Marché aux Puces*, a large, outdoor bazaar in Paris. This original market earned its name from the critter-infested goods it was rumored to sell.

The second theory alleges that the term was coined at a time when the slums and alleys of Paris were demolished and replaced by new construction. The dealers in second-hand goods who lived and worked in these old neighborhoods were forced to flee. The merchants' new gathering place was referred to as the "flee market," which later became "flea market."

The final theory associates the term with New York City's 18th century Fly Market. Apparently, the Dutch name for the market was *vlie*, which means valley but is pronounced "flea."

Whatever the reason for the origins of this opportunity for many to clean out their homes and make some money off of what they no longer wanted, this past weekend saw quite a few around the island. For some, like the throngs that flocked to the parking lot of the Certified Supercenter, bargains were the main attraction, with fun and treats for the kids plus shows like the one from the dancers of Club de Movimento, an added bonus. A very nice surprise for many bargain hunters was the fine clothing offered by Yvonne and her son Shaka, with designer names and a \$1.50 price tag! Not only was it a great deal, but all the proceeds went for charity.

The day of activities at the Washington Center had a small flea market attached, but the community members gathered mostly to share the day with their neighbors and enjoy some favorite pastimes. Children won prizes for their homemade kites, domino games were held, there was delicious criollo food for sale, and music to enjoy.

There were myriad bargains to be had on Queen's Birthday this year, always a cause for celebration!